

Adult Education--Functional Literacy and Life Skills Programs for State and Local Prisoners (CFDA No. 84.255)

I. Legislation

National Literacy Act of 1991, Section 601, P.L.102-73 (20 U.S.C. 1211-2), (expires September 30, 1997).

II. Funding History

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Appropriation</u>
1992	\$5,000,000
1993	4,910,400
1994	5,100,000
1995	5,100,000
1996	4,723,000

III. Analysis of Program Performance

A. Goals and Objectives

The Functional Literacy and Life Skills for Prisoners Program provides financial assistance to eligible entities to help them establish, improve, and expand a demonstration or systemwide functional literacy program. It also helps them in establishing and operating programs designed to reduce recidivism through the development and improvement of life skills necessary for reintegration into society.

The Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 amended the program statute to authorize the Secretary of Education to use up to 5 percent of program funds appropriated under the Functional Literacy and Life Skills Program for technical assistance activities.

B. Strategies to Achieve the Goals

Services Supported

In FY 1992, 11 functional literacy projects were funded at both correctional and jail education facilities. Over a two-year period approximately 6,800 persons were served through those projects. The projects provide services that help offenders achieve functional literacy, or, in the case of an individual with a disability, achieve a level of functional literacy commensurate with his or her ability.

Life skills projects were funded for the first time in FY 1993. FY 1995 funds were used to provide the third and final year of funding to 18 projects operating in correctional and jail education facilities in 13 states. Approximately 16,500 persons were served over a three-year period. Life skills projects must provide services, such as self-development, communication skills, job and financial skills development, education, development of interpersonal and family relationships, and stress and anger management, that help offenders prepare to return to their communities upon release from correctional facilities. FY 1996 funds support a new three-year grant cycle.

Strategic Initiatives

The Functional Literacy and Life Skills Program grants are monitored by the Department's Office of Correctional Education (OCE) which also provides technical support to state and local education agencies and schools funded by the Bureau of Indian Affairs on correctional education programs and curricula. In addition, OCE administers the technical assistance funds made available under the Functional Literacy and Life Skills Program as a result of the 1994 Crime Bill.

Some important efforts supported by the technical assistance funds are as follows:

- An interagency agreement with the Department of Justice's National Institute of Justice (NIJ). The purpose is to help support the research, development, and dissemination of three publications, highlighting a promising correctional life skills education programs funded through the Life Skills Programs for Prisoners at three sites.
- A publication entitled, "Is It Working? Self-Help Guide for Evaluating Vocational and Adult Education Programs." This guide was prepared to give project directors and evaluators of vocational and adult education programs, including correctional education, guidance for carrying out substantive program evaluations.
- A "Survey of State Correctional Education Systems: Analysis of Data." The survey of State correctional education systems presents key data collected in 1992-93 for adult and juvenile facilities as well as profiles on those states that responded to the survey. Specifically, the report provides data on the types of educational programs offered at correctional institutions, the number of inmates who participated in these programs, and the staffing and financial resources used to provide education.
- A publication entitled, "Success Stories: Life Skills Through Literature." "Success Stories" is a resource for teachers designed to assist them in using literature as a way of increasing relevance and retention while promoting literacy and life skills. It is not intended as an exhaustive resource, but as a springboard to further investigation by interested correctional teachers and administrators as to the why and how of utilizing literature as an educational tool.

C. Program Performance—Indicators of Impact and Effectiveness

The Office of Correctional Education has received draft final reports from several projects. The results of the Colorado life skills project show that the overall intervention produced significantly lower recidivism rates for the experimental group than for the matched control group. Of the 79 participants in each group, those in the life skills program had a recidivism rate that was less than half the rate of those in the control group.

An interim statistical report from Delaware's life skills project indicates that life skills participants had a recidivism rate of 8.1 percent, compared with 34.9 percent for the comparison group. In one facility involved in the Delaware life skills project, the Baylor Correctional Institution, none of the life skills participants had reoffended after one year.

IV. Planned Studies

Through a supplement to an existing grant with the state of Minnesota, technical assistance funds are being used to support an 18-month study using a sample comprised of every person who was scheduled

to leave three state correctional systems (Minnesota, Maryland, and Ohio) over the course of several weeks in winter of 1996. Currently, the researchers' goal is to include at least 3,000 persons in the sample. This project has two distinct phases.

Phase I involves giving the Test of Adult Basic English as a means of establishing academic competencies and surveying participants as to their personal characteristics, family situation, educational experiences, and involvement in drug and alcohol treatment. In addition, a researcher examines each study participant's educational and institutional record to verify the precise nature and extent of the educational and other types of programming he or she received while incarcerated, the academic gains made by those receiving educational services, and the level of institutional adjustment (number and severity of incident reports, etc.).

Phase II involves searches of local, state, and national crime databases for rearrest/reincarceration information and a survey of probation/parole staff to ascertain success of a sample of study participants in obtaining and retaining employment.

V. Sources of Information

1. Program files.
2. Literacy Behind Prison Walls: A National Adult Literacy Survey Report (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 1993).

VI. Contacts for Further Information

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